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P 312258Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2173
INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 8121
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0175
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ APR 9348
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 6044
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY 1442
RUEHQD/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 6698
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL PRIORITY 4360

UNCLAS BOGOTA 001197

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PTER PGOV PREL ECON SOCI CO

SUBJECT: AGUILAS NEGRAS AND THREATS AGAINST HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS

REF: A. A. BOGOTA 917
1B. B. BOGOTA 1095

Summary

11. (C) The GOC decried the recent violence and threats reported by various human rights groups after the March 6 march against para and state violence, and met with them to discuss their security. The GOC said preliminary investigations show that in three of the four union murders, the motives were not related to the march or the victims' union affiliation. Human rights groups blamed Uribe advisor Jose Obdulio Gaviria's comments linking the march to the FARC for the threats made by the "Aguilas Negras" criminal group. The GOC claims the "Aguilas Negras" presence in Bogota is small and limited to extortion. We urged Gaviria to end his criticism of the groups. End summary.

12. (C) The GOC consulted with human rights groups on the reports of violence and threats against human rights defenders made by various criminal groups, including the "Aguilas Negras." Between March 4 and March 11, four trade unionists, some of whom were reportedly associated with the March 6 event, were killed (reftel A). We met with march organizer and National Victims of State Violence leader Ivan Cepeda on March 17 to hear his concerns. Cepeda told us only one of the four union victims was directly involved in the march, but said the others belonged to groups that supported the event.

13. (SBU) The GOC publicly decried the threats and violence. Presidential Human Rights Program Director Carlos Franco said the GOC called a special meeting with the human rights groups on March 12 to discuss their security. Colombian National Police (CNP) Lt. Col. Fernando Buitrago Rueda said the CNP is investigating the threats, as well as the deaths of four claimed labor unionists.

14. (SBU) Ambassador Brownfield's met with one of the human rights groups, the Association for Alternative Social Policy (MINGA), to hear their concerns on March 18th (reftel B). We also met with Diana Gomez, one of the human rights workers who received an e-mail threat from the Aguilas Negras, on March 28 to discuss her security and possible temporary departure from the country. She left for Sweden on March 30th to attend a human rights conference, and said she planned to stay there for one month. We arranged a meeting for her with Rafael Bustamante, the Director the Protection Program, and they mutually agreed on starting protection

measures immediately upon her return.

¶15. (SBU) Local and international human rights groups criticized Uribe advisor Jose Obdulio Gaviria's statements linking the March 6 event to the FARC. They complained that these comments stigmatize the legitimate work of human rights defenders and incite violence against them. PolCouns met with Gaviria on March 28 to express concern about his statements. Gaviria said Vice-President Francisco Santos would write a conciliatory letter responding to the human rights groups' complaints; he also committed to drop his criticism of the groups.

¶16. (SBU) Media and human rights groups--citing reports by the Human Rights Ombudsman--claim the "Aguilas Negras" have a presence in Bogota, especially in the capital's poorer neighborhoods in the south. Franco said the CNP's investigation of the "Aguilas Negras" threat is ongoing, but said the GOC has no evidence to date of a significant "Aguilas Negras" presence in Bogota. CNP Commander Oscar Naranjo said any "Aguilas Negras" activity in Bogota is small and limited to extortion.

BROWNFIELD